

Now, the Senate has handled an even split before. Twenty years ago, faced with the same scenario, the two leaders brokered a power-sharing agreement so the institution could function smoothly.

The Democratic leader and I are discussing a similar agreement now. I have been heartened to hear my colleague say he wants the same rules from the 2000s to apply today, because, certainly, 20 years ago there was no talk—none whatsoever—of tearing down longstanding minority rights on legislation.

The legislative filibuster is a crucial part of the Senate. Leading Democrats, like President Biden himself, have long defended it. Democrats themselves just spent 6 years using it, literally, to block bills from Senator TIM SCOTT's police reform to coronavirus relief.

And less than 4 years ago, when it was Republicans who held the Senate, the House, and the Presidency, 27 current Democrats plus Vice President HARRIS signed a letter insisting this longstanding rule should not be broken.

So if the talk of unity and common ground is to have meaning and, certainly, if the rules from 20 years ago are to be our guide, then I cannot imagine the Democratic leader would rather hold up the power-sharing agreement than simply reaffirm that his side won't be breaking this standing rule of the Senate.

I appreciate our ongoing, good-faith discussions and look forward to finding the solution together.

Our side takes a great deal of pride in the accomplishments that three consecutive Republican Senates have delivered for the American people.

In 2014, our majority was elected to check and balance the last years of a lameduck Presidency.

In 2016, we were reelected to help ignite a real, all-American economic comeback, rebuild and modernize our military, and fight for the forgotten corners of our country. Together with the Trump administration and a Republican House, we did just that.

In 2018, we were rehired again on those strong results, especially the historic job market for American workers and our commitment to the judiciary.

And now, even as voters chose President Biden for the White House, they simultaneously shrunk Democrats' House majority and elected this evenly divided Senate.

The 2020 election was as far from a sweeping mandate for ideological transformation as any election we have seen in modern history. The American people stunned the so-called experts with the number of Republicans they sent to the House and to the Senate to make sure commonsense conservative values have a powerful say in the government.

So our side is ready to share ideas and work with the Biden administration, applying common sense to find common ground for the common good.

But if and when our Democratic friends depart from common sense, when they retreat from common ground or their proposals harm the common good, then we will use the power the American people have given us to push for what we think is right.

On the Biden administration's very first day, it took several big steps in the wrong direction. The President reentered the failed Paris climate agreement, a terrible bargain that would set us up to self-inflict major economic pain on working American families with no assurance that China or Russia would honor their commitments. In fact, the United States has already been reducing carbon emissions, while China and other nations in the agreement have kept increasing theirs. Rejoining will just set us up to kill American jobs while our competitors continue to roar on by.

The President also unilaterally canceled the Keystone XL Pipeline. The day-one priority was to kill thousands of American jobs, including union jobs, disappoint our strong ally Canada, and reverse some of our progress toward energy security. This is a project that the liberal Canadian Government and Prime Minister Trudeau support—an investment in North American energy. Even the Obama State Department concluded it would not harm the climate. But because canceling the pipeline project just feels like the green thing to do, the new administration killed all these jobs. This was not the day one the American workers deserved.

The new administration has also sketched out a massive proposal for blanket amnesty that would gut enforcement of American laws while creating huge new incentives for people to rush here illegally at the same time. This kind of failed approach will invite another humanitarian crisis on our border and privilege powerful interests ahead of American workers.

For all the talk about norms within government, last night brought a truly unprecedented move at the National Labor Relations Board. The President fired the Board's independent general counsel almost a year before the end of his term. Even leftwing activists called the unprecedented move "aggressive."

Now, it is still early. There is still plenty of time for President Biden to remember that he does not owe his election to the far left. The President can and should refocus his administration on creating good-paying American jobs, not sacrificing our people's livelihoods to liberal symbolism. Senate Republicans will be ready, willing, and eager to help make that happen.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The majority whip.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am happy to be standing here today on the Senate floor during an exciting week and one that really provides us with hope for the future. I welcome President Biden and, of course, Vice President HARRIS to their new roles and look forward to their leadership that they will provide in these difficult times.

We can never forget that America is still in the midst of a deadly pandemic. Tragically, we lost over 400,000 Americans. In my State of Illinois, we have seen more than 1 million COVID cases, and 18,398 of my neighbors and friends in Illinois have died due to this deadly virus.

As we continue to try to stop the spread of this pandemic, I am glad that the vaccine rollout has been able to help some in my State—537,000 people in Illinois have received vaccines. It is a refreshing and long overdue sight to have the President and White House fully engaged in addressing this pandemic with a focus on science and racial equity.

On his first day yesterday, President Biden signed several important Executive actions, including instituting a mask mandate for all Federal facilities and buildings.

Secondly, he moved to rejoin the World Health Organization. This was one of the most confounding decisions by the Trump administration. In the midst of a global pandemic, President Trump opted to remove the United States from the World Health Organization, which was focusing on the spread of this pandemic and its impact on nations around the world.

Finally, President Biden created an office to coordinate a national response to the pandemic. Today he is outlining a strong plan to provide a national strategy to liberate us from this threat.

I must say that I was disappointed in the transition when at first President Trump refused to acknowledge that he lost the election, and then his Agencies dragged their feet when it came to informing the Biden administration of the status quo in America. Thus,

today, we learn that we were not as prepared as we should have been when it came to distributing the vaccines that were being manufactured across this country. Now we almost have to start from zero to find a way to meet President Biden's challenge of 100 million Americans vaccinated in the first 100 days that he is in office. I pray that he is successful. We should do everything in our power on both sides of the aisle to give him the resources and the cooperation he needs.

The fact sheet of things that will be done by the Biden administration on COVID-19 is lengthy and impressive. The President, on the first day, established a White House COVID-19 Response Office and Coordinator, as I mentioned, required mask wearing and social distancing in Federal facilities, and rejoined the World Health Organization.

Today, President Biden also unveiled a national strategy to leverage Federal resources. It outlines detailed plans for a comprehensive vaccination strategy. If there was cheering—and there should have been—for the Warp Speed project developing successful vaccines in a short period of time, it was followed by some disappointment that even with these vaccines and the knowledge of how to make them, we are not producing them in the quantities necessary, and we are not addressing the logistics of spreading these vaccines across America where they are needed the most.

The President is setting out to restore trust by leading with experts for public outreach, and he is relying on science. That is refreshing. It is hard to imagine something that basic is as refreshing as it is. He is providing resources and guidance to reopen most K-8 schools in 100 days. Wouldn't that be a blessing? There isn't a parent or grandparent in this country who won't cheer that particular goal. He is addressing supply gaps and State capacity. We are finding them virtually all across the United States. And he is focusing on vulnerable populations, including those in long-term care facilities and communities of color.

To implement this plan, President Biden will sign Executive orders today to direct agencies to exercise all authorities, including the Defense Production Act, to accelerate the manufacturing and delivery of vaccination, testing, and medical supplies. Let me say, I have never understood why President Trump refused to use this Defense Production Act to its full capacity, to use his leadership as President to marshal the resources of production and distribution of vaccines and other absolutely necessary medical devices.

President Biden also is directing FEMA to increase Federal reimbursement to States from 75 to 100 percent for emergency supplies, such as PPE, and National Guard personnel. He is establishing a Healthy Equity Task Force to provide recommendations on

how to allocate and address racial and ethnic disparities that have been magnified by this crisis.

We know the economic damage of this virus continues to linger. Nearly one in four people in my State in renter households reports being behind on rent, and one in three households reports having difficulty just covering usual household expenses.

We continue to see historic numbers of Americans filing for unemployment, including more than 100,000 people in Illinois who applied for unemployment last week. But to fully address the health and economic toll of the pandemic, Congress needs to build upon the work we did in December and heed the call of the \$1.9 trillion plan that President Biden outlined last week.

I was part of a bipartisan group of Senators who met several months ago. We talked about following on the CARES Act with some measure of COVID relief. We proposed a plan of \$908 billion, which was then embraced by the leaders on both sides of the aisle and the White House, and they negotiated further. That resulted in the measure we passed just a few days ago. But make no mistake, that was not the end of the story, nor did we envision that it would be. This was done on a temporary emergency basis to cover the first quarter; that is, the first 3 months of this calendar year. I pray that this pandemic and all of the problems it has caused will soon be gone, but I doubt that it will happen in the next 3 months.

We have more work to do, and President Biden knows it. I think we all do. We need to come together again on a bipartisan basis.

The first CARES Act passed the Senate by a vote of 96 to nothing. There were no dissenting votes. The second measure, I believe, had 91 or 92 votes in favor of it. So we have shown real bipartisanship. We can't quit on this challenge.

Janet Yellen has been named as the Treasury Secretary designate by President Biden. I had a conversation with her 2 weeks ago. We talked about the perilous state of the economy. It is naive for us to believe that the worst is behind us. We have to face the reality that we may have darker days ahead, and we have to be prepared to deal with them—first, with the pandemic and, second, with the economy. Even the Chairman of the Federal Reserve has encouraged us not to take our foot off the accelerator, lest we lapse into a recession or worse.

Let's take this seriously. Let's help the businesses, help the workers, help the families, and do our best to get this economy back on its feet.

Illinois has spent \$843 million in our health departments to expand testing and vaccine delivery from the December package. But with half a million people vaccinated so far in a State of 13 million, more resources and support are needed. That means providing the \$20 billion for vaccine distribution and

\$50 billion for testing that President Biden has asked for as part of his rescue package so we can finally, once and for all, crush this virus, get the economy back on its feet, and get our kids back in school.

It also means investing in the health workforce, such as through a bill I have introduced with Senator MARCO RUBIO, Republican of Florida, to provide scholarship and loan repayment through the National Health Service Corps for doctors and nurses to serve in communities with a shortage of providers.

I say to the Presiding Officer, I am sure you are personally aware that there are fewer African-American doctors in the United States today than there were 10 years ago. I am sorry to report that. It should be just the opposite. We should have so many more, for many reasons, not the least of which is to overcome health inequity.

This scholarship program that Senator RUBIO and I are proposing builds on the model of the National Health Service Corp, which tracks young doctors to come and serve in underserved areas and to help underserved populations, and then helps pay off their student loans. We take this approach: Keep that; it is good. Expand it where we can, but let's look at another aspect. What if we provided scholarship assistance and really directed it toward minority candidates to become doctors and dentists and nurses and healthcare professionals? All of those aspects would be encouraged if people knew that they had a scholarship through the National Health Service and the promise that they would serve where they were needed after they graduated. We hope this will be included in any measure that is passed in the near future.

The President's plan sets out additional relief measures that will float to those in need. I am especially encouraged by making the child tax credit fully refundable. That is going to benefit 1 million kids in my State.

Also, the Biden plan aims to safely open schools, businesses, and travel while protecting workers in these areas and committing to protecting our most vulnerable populations.

I am ready to continue pushing for COVID relief. The job isn't finished by any means. We must provide American families and workers the tools they need to survive in this difficult economic time.

As Chair Yellen said earlier this week, "Without further action, we risk a longer, more painful recession now—and long-term scarring of the economy later."

Let's do this, America. Let's do it together. Let's let the spirit of unity that we saw on the West Front of the Capitol yesterday bring us together here in the Senate and the House in a joint effort to help the American people with the resources they need to survive this pandemic and this lengthy financial hardship.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of the quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I want to start by congratulating President Biden and Vice President HARRIS, who took office yesterday. We have a team of former Senators in the White House.

Yesterday was a hopeful day. The Capitol Building, so recently besieged by violence and lawlessness, resumed its rightful place as the seat of our democracy and backdrop for the peaceful transfer of power from one President to the next that is a hallmark of our system of government. The faith of many Americans has been shaken in recent weeks. But yesterday reminded us that our democracy still stands and our Nation endures—bruised, maybe, but unbroken.

I also want to express my profound gratitude to the Capitol Police officers and other law enforcement who, though outnumbered and overrun, defended this Capitol on January 6, and to the soldiers and the law enforcement who have guarded this building in the days since. We live in peace and freedom because of the service and sacrifice of our military and our police officers.

After the election of November, President Biden gave a victory speech in which he pledged to be “a President who seeks not to divide, but to unify. Who doesn’t see Red and Blue states, but a United States. And who will work with all my heart to win the confidence of the whole people.”

He reiterated that commitment in yesterday’s speech, stating: “On this January day, my whole soul is in this: Bringing America together, uniting our people, uniting our nation.”

That is what we need right now—a President who will unite us. If President Biden can truly be a President who governs for all Americans, who respects all Americans, and who works to win the confidence of the whole people, he will have done our Nation a great service.

And I do think President Biden is capable of doing this, but I do want to sound a cautionary note. It is common to talk about unity at Presidential inaugurations. But all too often that commitment to unity is forgotten—by the President or by the members of his party. I hope this commitment will be backed up with action and that Democrat leaders in Congress will embrace the President’s words. That means respecting those Americans who didn’t vote for President Biden as well as those who did.

It means working together to confront our Nation’s challenges, instead of adopting an “our way or the highway” approach. It means preserving minority rights in the Senate when it comes to legislation, the heart—the heart—of what makes the Senate special and something Republicans, I might add, defended during our time in the majority.

For the President, it means nominating individuals who represent a majority of Americans, not the far left fringes of his party. I have seen some hopeful actions from President Biden. Several of his nominees for important posts, while perhaps not those whom I would have chosen, are public servants whom I believe will serve our country well in positions like Director of National Intelligence, whom we voted on yesterday. And the President has demonstrated both his leadership and his concern for all Americans by prioritizing the pandemic and focusing on getting Americans vaccinated.

But there have been troubling things as well. While the President has nominated some mainstream candidates, other nominations raise serious concerns on issues like overregulation of the economy and life and conscience protections.

While I applaud the President’s focus on the pandemic, I am concerned that a number of the measures in his pandemic relief proposal are heavily partisan—and, certainly, not things that should be rushed through Congress without serious consideration of the long-term impact they would have on our economy and American families.

If there was any mandate given in this election, it was a mandate for moderation. A historic number of Americans voted for President Biden, but a historic number voted for President Trump as well. Democrats lost seats in the House of Representatives, and the Senate is evenly divided.

I hope—I really hope—that Democrat leaders and the President will remember that and not allow the far left, which has sought to hijack the Democratic Party in recent years, to determine their agenda. We have a chance—a chance—for a new day here in this country, and I believe that President Biden is committed to leading us there.

I pray that that commitment will endure and that we can spend the next months and years working together, legislating together, and ensuring the voices of all Americans are respected and heard.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, there have been few other times in American history when the need for economic growth through strategic, responsible, pro-business policies has been as great as it is today. Nothing is more important to a family than a

good-paying job. That is where the American dream begins.

Today, as our Nation fights to overcome the horrendous health and economic impacts of COVID-19, we must balance our approach. We have to protect American families and individuals who have been hurt by this crisis, support commonsense public health policies and an aggressive vaccine distribution effort, while also keeping businesses open, incentivizing future growth of businesses, large and small, and standing up to our economic adversaries, like Communist China, by reshoring our supply chain back home.

We also need to continue cutting regulations to make it easier for businesses to operate and for entrepreneurs to create jobs.

President Biden and his Cabinet have the important task of revitalizing our economy amid one of our Nation’s worst economic crises. In my 8 years as Governor of Florida, we balanced our budget each year, cut \$10 billion in taxes, paid off one-third of our State debt, and Florida companies added nearly 1.7 million jobs. But instead of looking to innovation and approving policies of States like Florida that will create jobs and help Americans and small businesses, the Biden administration is already making promises to go in the opposite direction—promises that are being championed by his nominee for Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen.

Let me be clear. I support targeted relief to help our small businesses and individuals who are hurting because of the coronavirus. With the start of a new administration, I was hoping to hear some fresh, new ideas on how to accomplish our shared goal of addressing this crisis. But that is not what we are hearing from the Biden administration. Their answer is the same as it always has been for Democrats: more government, more spending, higher taxes, no accountability.

Voters are befuddled by the claim that while families cannot borrow without limits or consequences, somehow the Federal Government can. It is irresponsible, and I won’t stand for it. We have to get serious about how we are spending taxpayer dollars. We already have more than \$27 trillion in Federal debt.

If interest rates return to their 50-year average, the interest on our Federal debt will make it impossible to fund our military, Medicare, and Social Security.

President Biden wants to spend more than \$350 billion to bail out wasteful, liberal States for their decades of mismanagement, and his nominees, including Ms. Yellen, support this nonsense.

Andrew Cuomo has threatened the New York wealthy that if they don’t help him get a Federal Government bailout, he will raise their taxes.

I was elected Governor of Florida when Cuomo was elected Governor of New York. While Governor of Florida, I lowered taxes each year. Cuomo raised